Invisible infertility:

Kiwi men & reproductive health
in New Zealand’s history

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‘Fertility Factors’ (my PhD, History/Law 2017)

• Medico-legal history of infertility

• 1950s – 21st century

• How did new medical technologies (such as IVF – *in vitro* fertilisation) affect understandings of infertility?
“‘It tears every part of your life away’: the truth about male infertility”
(The Guardian, 18 Nov. 2017)

Men are facing a fertility crisis, so why is most practical and emotional support offered to couples struggling to conceive aimed at women?

James and Davina D’Souza: ‘I felt helpless. You’d go online and there was no male conversation.’
Artificial insemination (donor) (‘AID’) 
- secrecy
- NZ - ‘herd improvement’ programmes (1930s)
1940s “Test tube babies”

_Auckland Star, 12 April 1945_

REGISTRATION PROBLEM

O.C. SYDNEY, April 6.

An Adelaide gynaecologist announced on Wednesday that South Australia's first "test-tube" baby was about to be born.

The Archbishop of Adelaide (Dr. Beovich) said: "The Catholic Church definitely opposes artificial insemination as against the moral law of God. Animals, however, are in a different category."
1950s – infertility medicine

• Infertility medicine develops as sub-specialty of O&G.
• ‘Couple’s issue’
• 1950 - NZ’s first infertility clinic established in Auckland
• Ongoing reticence about use of artificial insemination (legal & religious) so doctors using it did so secretly, no records kept.
• Some evidence - male doctors uncomfortable/uncertain about treating certain types of infertility
• Men too were reluctant patients, refusing to attend appointments (PMDs) – women took the lead in seeking treatment. Adoption was a popular non-medical alternative.

- The pioneer man
- The boozer and the decent bloke
- The hard man (rugby)
- The man’s man (Kiwis at war)
- The family man 1920-1950 [fertility & virility; being a father = real man]
- The bloke under siege 1950-86
1960s – female fertility drugs, motherhood promotion
1970s – AID clinics & IVF

• 1972 – first AID clinic established at National Women’s Hospital, Auckland

• IVF developments in UK & Australia

• Abortion debates
1980s – IVF
- ongoing higher visibility of women / mothers in media
WEEKEND MAGAZINE
Saturday, April 26, 1986

MIRACLES happen
but not every day

For many, infertility may be something that happens to a friend of a friend. And although it is a condition not freely talked about, it is more common than many people believe. Some 20 to 30 percent of all people have problems that could cause infertility. Health reporter Tracy Miles has prepared this special feature.

Programme boasts fine record

Dr. Pedro's Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) programme has a notable record.

It takes 10 percent of women who have been infertile over a period of years to conceive with Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) programme, five times the success rate of donors who have been infertile for a shorter period of time. Dr. Pedro's programme has a 10-year success rate of 70 percent. The programme has been in operation since 1975 and has treated over 1,000 couples. The success rate is based on the number of successful pregnancies after a period of two years. AID has been used in over 150 couples, and over 100 pregnancies have been achieved.

Ways and means

For a couple who have been infertile for a long time, the next step in the programme is to consider AID. The programme is not a cure-all, but it can provide hope for a couple who have been infertile for a long time. The programme is not a cure-all, but it can provide hope for a couple who have been infertile for a long time.

Mr. Gillette's experience

Mr. Gillette's experience was similar to the experience of others who have used AID. He and his wife had been infertile for 10 years. They had tried every other avenue to conceive, but were unsuccessful. They were referred to Dr. Pedro's AID programme and were successful after two years. Mr. Gillette said, "The programme was a lifeline for us. We were able to start a family after years of trying."
MALE FERTILITY

It's official. Men today aren't as fertile as they were in your granddad's time — or dad's, for that matter. Margie Thompson finds out why.

WHEN Nagel used to come onto the scene he was a real fitness freak. But today even his masculinity was bathe in muscle, which he had to work hard for. Nagel was one of the first to claim that fertility was a problem, but he had a point. Nagel's research showed that the average man is now only 50 years old, whereas before it was around 30. In recent years, Nagel has been researching the sperm count of men in the USA and found that the average count has dropped by 50% in the last 30 years. Nagel believes that the reason is a combination of lifestyle factors, such as diet, smoking, and alcohol, and also environmental factors, such as pollution and stress.

Specialists are worried about rapidly declining sperm counts.

The big news discovery that sperm count has dramatically increased over the last 10 years could revolutionise our attitude to the problem of infertility, which affects a significant proportion of the population. However, Nagel believes that the decline in sperm count is becoming concerning and that more people need to be aware of this issue. Nagel's research was published in the British Medical Journal and his findings have been widely cited by experts in the field.

In the future, Nagel hopes to continue his research and to develop new treatments to help couples struggling with fertility.
Heartache and joy as Jan cuddles special son

Jan Lowant reached menopause at 15 and the prospect of ever having a normal seemed remote. But Jan was determined to have a child even after her birth control pill was removed after the first of the baby's that lay ahead. Liz Jane reports.

I'll be the most beautiful mum in the world!

VIRGIN MUM!

A 44-year-old British woman has become a mother, even though she's still a virgin.

The baby was born on February 23, and the mother, 38-year-old Beverley May, gave birth to a healthy baby girl weighing 3.5 pounds.

Ms May, who had undergone a hysterectomy at the age of 25, was concerned about the possibility of never being able to have a baby.

However, her doctors assured her that it was possible to conceive even without a uterus.

Ms May and her partner, 40-year-old Paul Johnson, decided to try for a baby after considering adoption.

The couple were overjoyed when they found out that Ms May was pregnant.

The birth was described as a miracle by the couple, who had been married for 10 years and had been trying to conceive for several years.

Liz Jane reports.

PAST MENOPAUSE

For more than 20 years Pat Parker (48) tried unsuccessfully to have a child. She was heartbroken when menopause arrived, thinking her last hope had gone. But Pat was mistaken... Jill Palmer reports.

LITTLE CELY LOWANT... she was not even a month old when she was born to a 44-year-old British woman who had undergone a hysterectomy.

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Liz Jane reports.
1990s - ICSI-IVF (Intra-Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection)

- 1992 - world’s 1st ICSI-IVF baby born
- 1994 first used in NZ
- Major breakthrough in male infertility (‘revolution’)
- Muted media response
21stC - Maurice Williamson - openness

• (“Big Gay Rainbow” speech (Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill, 3rd Reading, 17 April 2013)

• Fertility treatment experiences (Human Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, 3rd Reading, 10 Nov. 2004)
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Creating Kiwi Families: Historical and Legal Perspectives from 1830

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